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REP. NORMAN MINETA (D-Calif.), member and former chairman of the House aviation subcommittee, last week charged that oil companies are "sticking it" to commercial industries with high prices and asked FAA Administrator James Busey to investigate the issue. He noted that although automobile fuel prices have declined, aviation fuel prices remain elevated. Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association agreed, saying avgas currently costs 15 percent more than before the Persian Gulf crisis with an average of $2.16 per gallon. "While prices have come down slightly from the high of approximately $2.20 per gallon, avgas prices are not returning to their pre-crisis levels at nearly the same rate as highway fuel prices," AOPA told the aviation subcommittee.

LIKELIHOOD of continued turnover in ownership of fixed-base operators is evidenced by a recent survey of National Air Transportation Association members. NATA President Larry Burian said one-third of the respondents said they were contemplating the sale of their facility, attempting to sell it or that the facility had changed hands in the past 12 months.

ROBERT SHOWALTER, president of Showalter Flying Service in Orlando, Fla., suggested last week that managing a fixed-base operation "should lead to a federal pension, since the time spent in understanding and complying with the various federal, state and local regulations and procedures occupies some two and one-half man-years" at his medium-size facility that employs 31 people. Showalter, who was addressing FAA's First Annual General Aviation Forecast Conference in Denver, said "the only possible efficiencies and bottom-line performance that all of this effort generates is the avoidance of some fines and penalties."

BUSEY SAYS HIGH COSTS TO BLAME FOR GENERAL AVIATION DECLINE; INDUSTRY REPS SAY GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS ARE PART OF THE PROBLEM

FAA Administrator James Busey last week said the agency expects "virtually no increase in [the number of] private pilots over the next 12 years," and attributed that projected lack of growth to the high costs of operating general aviation aircraft. Addressing FAA's First Annual General Aviation Forecast Conference in Denver last Thursday, Busey said that although FAA forecasters "expect a 50 percent increase in the general aviation turbine-powered fleet in the next 12 years, the number of single-engine piston aircraft will remain about what it is today. There'll be no growth in this segment." He added that the number of hours flown by single-engine piston aircraft will increase less than one-half percent per year in the years ahead. Hours flown by the entire GA fleet, including turbine-powered aircraft, are expected to increase only 1.4 percent per year during the 12-year period, from 35.4 million last year to 41.6 million in 2002. Busey noted that in the 1960s and 1970s GA fleet hours were growing by an average of six percent per year.

"Now why, in the world's leading aviation nation, is general aviation not in better shape?" Busey asked. "It's two one-syllable words: high costs. With each passing year, it costs more to buy a plane, to insure it, to maintain it and to put fuel in the tanks. Our figures show that it costs 83 percent more to operate a single-engine, piston-driven plane today than it did 12 years ago," he said.

Busey acknowledged that two efforts by FAA to increase the number of general aviation pilots, establishment of a new category of recreational pilot certificate and new standards for a basic primary aircraft – both of which were undertaken at the urging of GA groups – "so far have not paid off the way we had hoped." Busey observed that one of the industry's most pressing problems continues to be the soaring costs related to pro-

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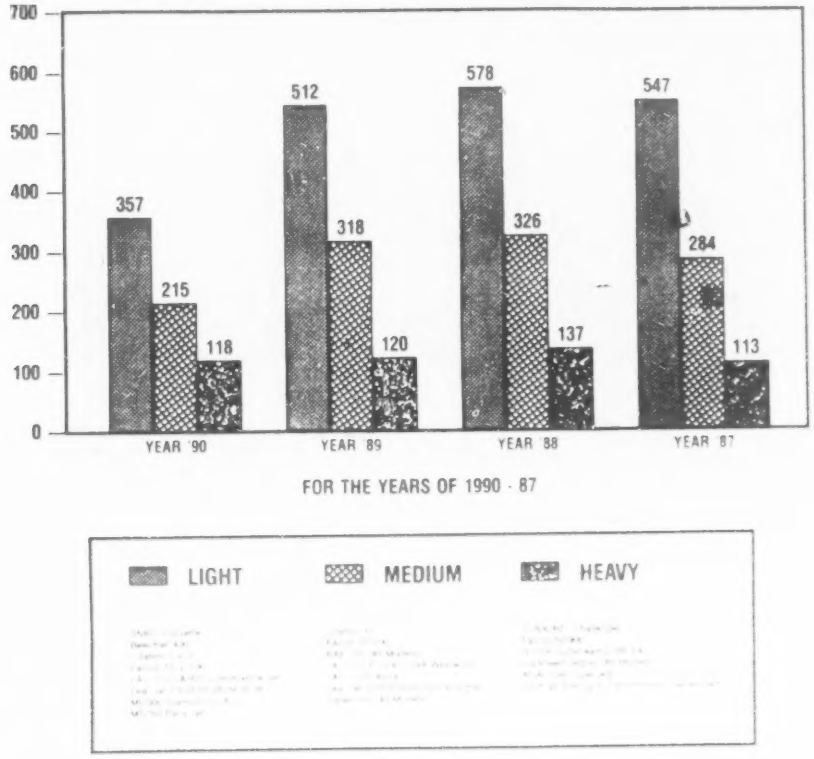
USED RETAIL JET DELIVERIES - NORTH AMERICA



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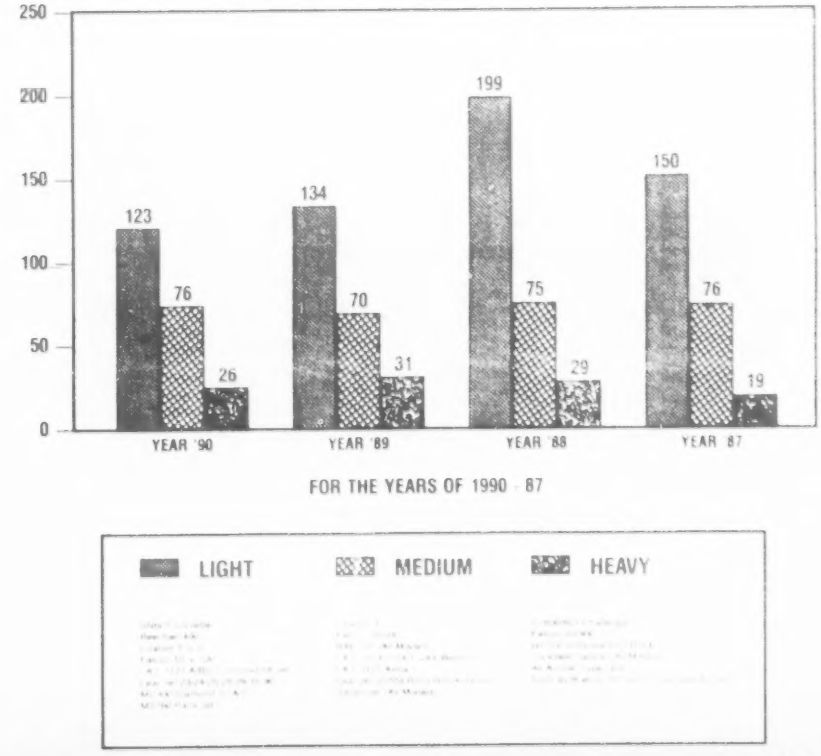

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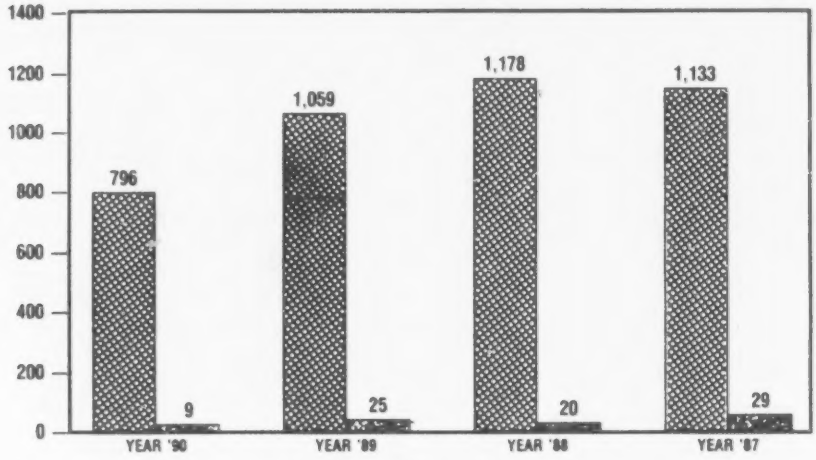

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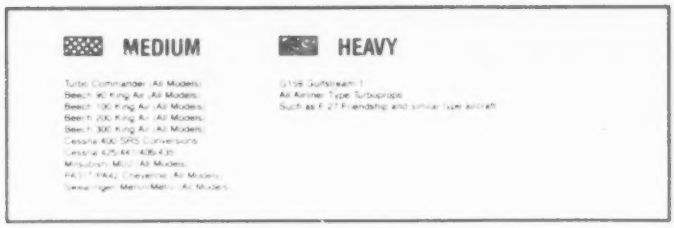

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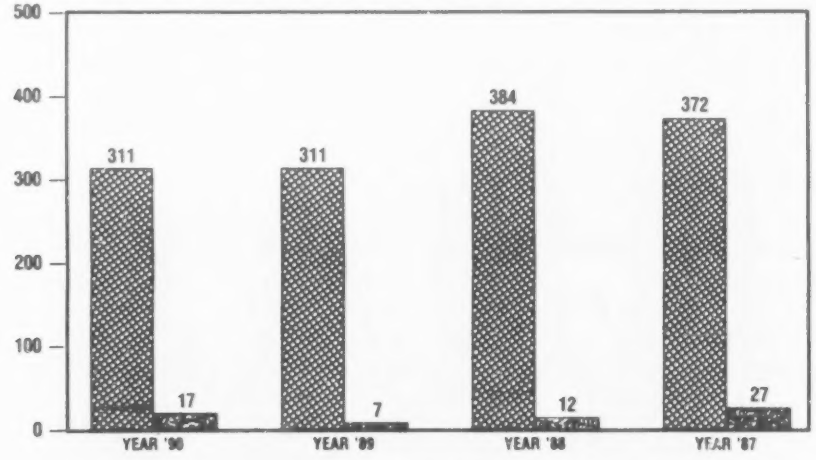

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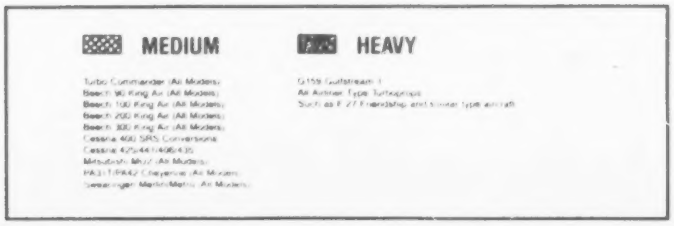

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